
Cyprus, the *Enosis* Struggle, and Greece:
Sir John Stavridi and the British Offer of 1915*

JOHN T. A. KOUMOULIDES

Wednesday 14th January 1914

I telephoned to Lloyd George that the Prime Minister was arriving tomorrow & we arranged to breakfast with him & Churchill on Friday morning. — This was put off owing to absence of Sir Edward Grey from town. Venizelos postponed his arrival.

Tuesday 20th

I went to Folkestone with Gennadios & returned to London with Prime Minister, Valaorites, & the others. In the train we had a long conversation. The Prime Minister had come to see Sir E. Grey on various matters & asked me to ascertain from Lloyd George whether he was at liberty to talk over with him the proposed entente with Greece & the question of Cyprus.

Wednesday 21st

I breakfasted with the Chancellor of the Exchequer & he wished to arrange an interview with Churchill & Prince Louis. He had no objection to Venizelos talking matters over with Sir E. Grey as the latter had been kept informed of all our negotiations but he was perfectly certain that, owing to the acute political crisis on the Home Rule Bill, nothing whatever would be done at the present time to carry into effect the proposals we had at heart.

Same day, 10 a.m.

I saw Venizelos & reported to him my interview & had long conversation about future prospects of liberated Greece, & the Islands which latter were causing serious trouble with Turkey. We talked over the failure to obtain the dreadnought & he thanked me for what I had done.

*Continued from *Journal of Modern Hellenism* No. 4 (1987) pp. 93-119.

Later

Lloyd George telephoned with appointment for breakfast tomorrow at 9:30 at Winston Churchill's & I informed Venizelos.

Thursday 22nd January

Breakfast at the Admiralty. Churchill, Lloyd George, Prince Louis of Battenberg, Venizelos & self. Prime Minister reported his interview with Grey, to whom he did not speak of Cyprus as he quite understood that in the present condition of British politics it was out of the question to think even of that proposal. However, he was here & was prepared to arrange the terms of the entente with the British Government, leaving the question of Cyprus to be dealt with at a later date. A long discussion took place as to the part played by our navy during the war and Venizelos explained how Greece had managed to transport a Bulgarian army from Salonica to Dedeagatch & a Servian [*sic*] army from Salonica to San Giovanni, quickly & without a hitch on Greek boats only.¹ Both Churchill & Lloyd George praised very highly both our army & fleet, but were of opinion that, until the Government were far from the Irish question, it was useless to endeavour to arrange the working of an entente. These interviews, however, had allowed them to become acquainted with one another, to feel that they could have confidence in one another, & had opened the door to future negotiations as soon as the Irish question was out of the way. Churchill suggested that they might meet again in July or August & Venizelos promised to return then & resume the negotiations. — I was immensely struck with the change in Venizelos' manner & demeanour; he was no longer the head of a small nation ready to accept favours & perhaps rather begging them; one felt that he realised that he had a victorious army at his back & had something worth having to offer in exchange for anything received.

Thursday 21st January 1915

Just 12 months since I opened this book. Lloyd George rang me up & invited me to lunch. — He told me that there had been a conference of Ministers that morning; that the British Government had information that Germany was preparing a large army to send through Austria with the intention of crushing Servia [*sic*]; that the latter, unaided, would be unable to resist and the collapse

¹Alexandroupolis. The spelling Servia was the normal one in England until the Serbian allies requested the change. Stavridi uses both names indiscriminately.

of Servia [*sic*] would be a great catastrophe, as then Bulgaria would join the dual Alliance & Turkey & the task of the Entente powers would be greatly increased. If this happened, there was no doubt that Bulgaria would attack Greece & it would become a very grave question for us, as Servia [*sic*] would not be able to assist us & Romania would be practically paralysed & would not dare move once Bulgaria was in alliance with Germany & Austria. A note had been sent to the Ministers at Athens & Bucharest instructing them to communicate this information to the Governments & to urge the latter to come to Serbia's assistance; at the same time to ask what help they would want from England to enable them to do so. — He said that M. Millerand, the French Minister of War was arriving tomorrow & that the Ministers were dining with him in the evening & that they were going to discuss the matter with him. Lord Kitchener was prepared to send British troops, the regular army, not territorials, to Greece to fight with us, & the Government felt convinced that, in that case, the Bulgarians would never dare to attack us, as although they hated us & France, they still had some feelings of friendship for England. He would provide all the money we required for this war on very reasonable terms & we, therefore, need not worry about that, but the request for British soldiers must come from us, & he asked me to cable privately to Venizelos, explaining matters & asking for a reply before tomorrow evening so that they could show it to Millerand. — I then sat down & drafted the cable; Lloyd George read it through & went to show it to the Prime Minister, who approved. He then took it to Lord Kitchener who altered it by limiting the British forces to be sent to "one army corps" (about 40,000 men); the draft was copied at the Treasury & handed to me for despatch. Lloyd George said that if more than one army corps was required, England would not refuse to send more men; in fact, they would not allow their men to be beaten & would send as many as might be required once they had put their hand to the job. — He also said that now, in all discussions with the Powers, the question of asking us to surrender Kavalla had been dropped & would not be brought up again; but if Bulgaria were willing to help Servia [*sic*] against Austria & if, as a result of this war, Serbia were to acquire Dalmatia, Bosnia, & Herzegovina, then they would ask that Serbia should surrender to Bulgaria part of Macedonia at Monastir & Ochrida. — As regards Albania, the experiment had failed & the country should be divided between Serbia & ourselves — The members of the Government had seen & conversed with Noel Buxton on his return from the East & they had unanimously approved of the Greek views he had put before them in case

of dismemberment of the Turkish Empire. England would wish to have Smyrna & the littoral of Asia Minor down to the spot coveted by Italy, opposite Rhodes. He told me Roumania was desirous of joining the war & that England had given her money for that purpose, but she would not be ready for some weeks.

I attended Legation & sent a long cable to Venizelos.

Friday 22nd January

Venizelos' telegram arrived, thanking Chancellor of Exchequer: "En réponse à votre dépêche télégraphique sub No. 131 je vous prie de remercier Ministre des Finances pour son message amical auquel j'ai été particulièrement sensible. Vu que je ne pourrai donner une réponse à la demande du Gouvernement anglais qu'après la remise officielle de la note anglaise annoncée dans votre télégramme et une entente préalable avec Sa Majesté le Roi et le Conseil des Ministres, il est impossible que ma réponse parvienne à Londres jusqu'à ce soir. Je me réserve de vous la faire savoir aussitôt que possible. Venizélos." —

I immediately (5 p.m.) telephoned this on the Lloyd George.

Saturday 23rd January

Lloyd George telephoned to me to breakfast with him at 9:15 a.m. He related to me the discussion of last night between the Prime Minister, Lord Chancellor, Lord Kitchener, Grey, Churchill himself, & Millerand. The latter was strongly opposed to England sending any troops at all to the East, as France might, in certain eventualities, require them all. He got quite excited on the subject, but failed entirely to convince the British Ministers. Lloyd George stated that the official note to the British Ministers in Athens & Bucharest had been kept back & now they would alter it & not ask what assistance we should require from England. The information received was clear, to the effect that by the middle or end of February, an assembling force would attack Serbia & that the latter would be unable to resist; that Bulgaria would immediately attack Serbia & Greece. England was well aware of Bulgaria's machinations under the guise of neutrality; her finance minister was at present in Berlin arranging a loan & it was self-evident that Germany would not & could not give a single penny to anyone unless it was for the purpose of assisting her in the war. — He went on to say that if we decided to assist Serbia, England would send us locomotives & rolling stock & would provide our army as well as theirs with ammunition & supplies. He read me a report by a Board of Trade engineer on our railways, showing that the difference of gauge was

only 3/4" and that the English rolling stock could be used without alteration. — He thought, if we desired it, the British Government could persuade France to send some French troops to cooperate with English & Greeks in Serbia, but we must ask for it ourselves. He stated that it would take exactly three weeks to land an English army corps with all artillery provisions, etc. . . . at Salonica & there was, therefore, no time to be lost. The finance ministers of England, France, & Russia were to meet in Paris on or about the 5th July to discuss financial matters in regard to the war & Lloyd George suggested that Venizelos should join them & discuss the whole matter with them; he could give it out that he was going to Paris in regard to the Greek loan. — Lloyd George stated that England had advanced 60 million already to Russia & it would be necessary to give her more. He felt that France, with all her riches, was not doing her fair share in financing the war & he was going to Paris to see whether he could not get her to do more. He also said that he was persuaded that France had more men in reserve than they were willing to admit, & that, instead of calling up more, they were asking for English troops. After war broke out, England volunteered to send six divisions to France & they had already sent twenty, so that France could not complain.

I sent a long telegram to Venizelos, reporting the interview & the proposal that he should come to Paris.

Tuesday 26th January

The Minister has received a long telegram from Venizelos, agreeing to join in the war. He explains the interview with the British Minister & the request of the English Government, & goes on to say: "Cet appel répond trop bien à la communauté de nos intérêts avec la Serbie & à nos sentiments de reconnaissance pour les Puissances de l'Entente et la réelle sympathie pour leur cause pour n'être pas favorablement accueillie. Aussi moyennant certaines conditions indiquées ci-après le Gouvernement Hellénique est tout disposé [*sic*] à donner son appui à la Serbie et à mettre ses forces entières au service d'une cause éminemment juste et libérale, dont le triomphe assure le complet et définitif établissement national de l'Hellénisme." He then goes on to say that one of the conditions is that England should endeavour to bring about the collaboration of Bulgaria. This is so important that, with a view to securing it, Greece would be willing to withdraw the opposition to Servia [*sic*] ceding part of Macedonia to Bulgaria, Serbia, under her treaty with

Greece, being unable to cede any territory to Bulgaria without Greece's consent. — If England cannot obtain Bulgaria's cooperation, then they will try to obtain cooperation of Roumania & neutrality of Bulgaria; but if the latter's neutrality cannot be guaranteed, then Greece asks for a British contingent, or a joint British & French one. —

I attended at Downing Street & told Lloyd George, whom I saw one minute on his return from Buckingham Palace on his way to a Cabinet meeting.

Tuesday 16th February

Gennadios went to see Lloyd George at the Treasury with a view to obtaining a further loan of 13,000,000 francs for the Government, & was dumbfounded to learn that Sir Francis Elliott had telegraphed that when he saw Venizelos & informed him that England & France were prepared to send their men to Greece, the latter had replied that Greece could not agree to join in the war. Lloyd George said that it was with great difficulty he had persuaded France to send a contingent, that Russia had consented to send, by the Danube, 10,000 men of the second line to guard the Serbian & Greek railways against an attack by the Bulgarians, and now came Greece's refusal. He said that it was a combination that it might be difficult to renew and an opportunity for the realisation of Greek aspirations which probably would not present itself a second time. England did not want to see Russia preponderate in the East after the war & that was the reason they were going to make a tremendous effort in the Balkans & on the Dardenelles. It was still time if Greece wished to reconsider her decision. —

What has come over Venizelos? It all appears incomprehensible.

Wednesday 17th February

Gennadios has received a long, weak, inane telegram from Venizelos, in which he recounts an interview he had with the English & French Ministers who called on him to notify him officially of the request of their Governments to Greece to join in the war & that British & French contingents were ready to land at Salonica to assist us. He then says: "Je n'ai pas hésité à répondre sur le champ que ce qu'on nous demande est une impossibilité" . . . & goes on to state that Bulgaria has refused either to join or to promise neutrality,

that Roumania has refused to give any decided answer, & that if Greece were to send her army north into Serbia, the Bulgarians would immediately attack her & probably take not only Kavalla but also Salonica & all the South Eastern district of Macedonia. He had seen General Pau & explained the attitude of Greece fully to him, & although the latter had refrained from expressing any opinion, he would doubtless report Venizelos' views to the French Government!!! He expresses at length the fear that both Greece & Serbia would be crushed between the Austro-German forces in the north & the Bulgarians in the South. He ignores altogether the offer made by England & France to send troops, & seems to think that, notwithstanding the presence of these, Bulgaria would dare to attack us & thus set herself at war with the Powers of the Triple Entente!!!

I had hoped for some explanation from Venizelos, & this is all! Greece is on the verge of committing suicide. This decision is one of the greatest historical blunders ever committed. It is most despairing. They do not realise the temper of the English nation, nor they resolve to fight this war to complete victory at whatever cost. They hear of German & Austrian successes & believe that they can win, & the Government is afraid. If only they would take the public into their confidence, they would find the whole nation overwhelmingly in favour of joining the Allies. Venizelos' decision is an absolute negation of everything written in this little book. It cannot be that all his feelings & aspirations, mentioned at the various interviews reported here, have been changed & thrown overboard. There must be something we do not know yet!

Sunday 28th February

I wrote to Lloyd George to suggest that immediate steps be taken to force the hand of Greece; that England should send someone out to Athens, as the Government's decision was clearly against the wishes of the people, & if England & France's offer were made known the people & the Press, would force Venizelos' hand. —

Tuesday 2nd March

Lloyd George telephoned me to breakfast with him. He had learned from Athens that the opposition made to the Allies' proposals came solely from the King and not from Venizelos. The Government here had received a telegram saying that, in all probability, Greece would come in "on certain conditions," that the conditions had not yet been formulated, but that they were expected at any time, & he hoped they would be such as England & France

could accept. He still believed in Greece & had full confidence in Venizelos; but now was our time to come to a decision. Our help was badly needed in the next six weeks, after that every week that went by, we should be wanted less & less, & soon the day would come when the Allies would be able to dispense with our assistance & would even refuse it if proffered. They required men & artillery now & we had both. Probably they would want us to assist in forcing the Dardanelles & taking Constantinople. I suggested that England should send someone out to the East to visit all the Balkan capitals as I felt convinced that personal interviews with the various Prime Ministers & Monarchs might be conducive in bringing about the renewal of the Balkan alliance, with the addition of Rumania [*sic*]. He approved the proposal & suggested that the Government should ask A. J. Balfour or Sir E. Grey to undertake the journey; I was in favour of neither, but suggested that he himself should go as I thought that, as a conciliator, he would have more success than either of those he had mentioned. He did not dislike the idea & sent a note to the Prime Minister, who replied approving & stated it might be submitted to the Council of Defence today. — Lloyd George thought that Venizelos would win the day & that he would so moderate the conditions which the King might wish to impose as to make them acceptable to the Allies. He wished me to tell Venizelos that his confidence in him remained unaltered & he hoped that the proposed alliance, talked of at all our interviews, would soon become an acknowledged fact. Only we must move quickly. Every day that went by was so much time wasted for us, & we might very soon find ourselves left out in the cold. He would let me know as soon as he heard the "conditions" asked for by Greece.

Wednesday 3 March

Venizelos has called a State Council together, composed of all ex-Prime Ministers, to decide as to steps to be taken. It is clear that the difference of opinion between him and the King must be intense.

[Newspaper clipping]

THE DELIBERATIONS IN ATHENS

FRENCH COMMENT

(FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT)

PARIS, March 4. [1915]

The Grand Council of the Crown held yesterday in Athens has attracted general attention in this country. Considerable emphasis is laid on the presence of M. Romanos, the Greek Minister in Paris, in the Greek capital, and it is agreed that the recall

of General Dousmanis to the post of Chief of the General Staff is highly significant. Since the beginning of the war, no one in France has had any doubt as to the real sympathies of Greece.

Now, however, the Franco-English Fleet is bombarding the Dardanelles. In view of these facts, it is felt that a change in the attitude of Greece is inevitable.

In the past, M. Venizelos did not consider that even the despatch of a Franco-English expeditionary force to Salonika would be a sufficient guarantee to enable Greece to take active measures.

The *Temps*, in the article quoted above, reminds the Greek Government that its decision will be very serious, since today there can be in Europe no localised intervention, and if Greece intervenes, she will be bound to become the partner of the Allies in the great game that is being played on the chessboard of Europe.

The Council was adjourned till Friday to enable the members of the General Staff to advise us as to the preparedness of the Army, & generally on military matters.

Friday 5th March

Wrote long letter to Venizelos.

Saturday 6th March

The legation has received a telegram from Venizelos stating that, after the holding of the State Council, he called upon the French, Russian, & English Ministers & told them that a decision was on the point of being reached & that he would be in a position tomorrow (*viz.*: today) to offer the Allies the active cooperation of the whole of the Greek fleet & one division of the army for the operations of the Dardanelles.

It looks as if the King has given way on the advice of the Council.

Sunday Times [newspaper clipping]

7th March

RESIGNATION OF GREEK CABINET

DIFFERENCE WITH THE KING

ATHENS, Saturday.

In the Chamber today, M. Venizelos, the Premier, announced that as the King did not approve of the policy of the Government, the Cabinet had resigned. — Reuter.

The worse has happened. Poor Greece.

The Times [newspaper clipping]
Monday 8th March

ATHENS, March 6.

The Venezelos [*sic*] Cabinet has resigned, its resignation being accepted.

M. Venezelos [*sic*] called a meeting of his supporters last evening, and declared that the injury caused by the non-adoption of his policy was irreparable. He advised them, however, to submit to the decision of the King.

Irreparable is the correct word. — Why submit to the decision of the King when you know him to be in the wrong? After the meeting of the Council on Friday, Venizelos thought he had carried the day; otherwise, his statement to the Ministers of France, Russia, & England is incomprehensible; therefore, the other Prime Ministers present must have shared his views. On that same day, the King must have vetoed his decision. — Why sacrifice the whole future of Greece? If only the people knew, they would have forced the King's hand. He will live to repent his decision, but poor Greece will have suffered an irreparable wrong.

Wednesday 10th March

New Government formed. Gounaris Prime Minister & War & Ch. Zographos Foreign Affairs. —

Friday 12th March

Lloyd George telephoned me to go & breakfast with him. He greeted me with the words: "Well, you have lost Smyrna & any chance of obtaining a footing in Asia Minor." He went on to talk of our golden opportunities thrown away. Greece had it in her hands to become a real power in the East; she had the possibility of realising some of her oldest national dreams & aspirations & had thrown it all away at the bidding of a presumptuous & vainglorious King. I told him I did not suppose he had invited me to tell me *that*, as he was too clever not to know what my own feelings were, & there was no need to "rub it in." He went on to say that the Greek General Staff were convinced that Germany would win the war. The King was strongly pro-German in his sympathies; in fact, he saw the German Military Attaché every day, whereas, on the two or three occasions that the English Military Attaché has asked for an audience, the same had been refused: The New Greek Government

had made a declaration to the British Minister to the effect that the Government must not assume that there has [*sic*] been any change in the feelings of the King or the Greek Government towards the Powers of the Triple Entente; all their sympathies are with them and the only question for Greece is "the opportune moment for intervention." Lloyd George dismissed this with a toss of the head: "King's Piffle!"

He stated that about three weeks ago the Bulgarian Minister had been to see him & said that his country was prepared to come in & give the support of its army to the Allies, provided the latter would persuade Serbia to give up Northern & Eastern Macedonia, & Greece to give up Kavalla & South Eastern Macedonia. Lloyd George replied that England, France, & Russia had decided not to ask Greece to make any sacrifice; & there the matter ended. Since Monday, however, Bulgaria had again offered her army to invade Thrace & attack Chatalja when the Allies would have forced the Dardanelles in about three weeks time. Several of the British Ministers were inclined to accept the proposal but the Cabinet had decided to postpone the decision for a fortnight. He told me that Russia preferred the Bulgarians to us. She was jealous of Greece & had openly expressed her satisfaction that we had decided not to send our army to assist in taking Constantinople. Bulgaria had no historical claims to Constantinople, whereas Greece had, & Russia would be displeased to see our army enter with the Allies into that town. Russia, however, had willingly agreed to our having Smyrna & the littoral as reward for services we might render but will not have us at or near the Dardanelles.

Lloyd George said that at a past meeting of the Cabinet, several Ministers had proposed that Greece be notified that all proposals made to her & all promises, whether official or unofficial, were withdrawn & that the Allies no longer required her assistance. The Prime Minister, Churchill, & himself were opposed to it & the discussion had adjourned for a fortnight to give time to see what was going to be the policy of the new Government. However, it was decided that England would give us no further invitation; any fresh proposal must come from our side, & if none came within the next fortnight, the Cabinet would decide to notify us definitely that our assistance was no longer required. He could, however, tell me this, at present, the Allies had no need of our Army, so that the alleged fears of the General Staff need not be taken into consideration. What they did require, and what they lacked, was torpedo boats, destroyers, & small craft for use with the fleet attacking the Dardanelles. If these were offered by Greece, they would be gladly

accepted; but the offer must come from Greece & must come quickly. Grey was going to Paris next week to consult with French [*sic*] Foreign Minister in regard to the Balkan Powers & on his return, the Cabinet would come to final decision. To get through the Dardanelles, Greek assistance would be invaluable; once through, Bulgaria would be much more useful than us & much less embarrassing with their ally Russia. He could not imagine Greece in alliance with Germany, unless the King had gone mad, as "all the Greek eggs are in the English basket." Of all the countries, Greece was the most vulnerable so long as England was mistress of the sea; and whereas we had nothing to gain from an alliance with Germany, we had everything to lose.

He told me that it was lucky for us that Masterman was no longer in the Cabinet as he was strongly anti-Greek, & might have carried the decision to exclude us forthwith from all participation with the Allies.

He authorised me to telegraph a summary of our conversation to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, M. Zographos, & to impress upon him the necessity of making any proposal Greece wished to make within the next fortnight.

Later

Send long telegram to Zographos summarising the above.

Monday 15th March

Long telegram to the Legation asking the Minister to communicate to Sir E. Grey the sentiments of the Greek Government towards the Powers of the Triple Entente &, more particularly, toward England. — Zographos recalls the past & the debt of gratitude we owe to England & talks of the "Puissances protectrices" as . . . The same old tale that Lloyd George would call "Piffle." Venizelos had swept that away, had dropped the attitude of the beggar coming to ask for alms; he knew his power & had made for Greece a name of which we could all be proud. Now we seem to be going back to the old, old methods which had made Greece a byword in European diplomacy. The pity of it!

Tuesday 16th March

I received a telegram from Zographos thanking me for mine & asking whether I am able to give him information as to what would be the result for Greece if the Powers accept Bulgaria's offer of troops to invade Thrace. If I cannot answer from my own knowledge, I

am to see Lloyd George again "et provoquer des explications à ce sujet en vous gardant bien de laisser deviner que vous agissez à notre demande." — It looks as if they were going to decide not to come in & want to know the worst. If they think I am going to try & "pump" Lloyd George, they are mistaken. If he felt that I was not perfectly open & sincere with him, he would never see me again. For him, truth comes above all things.

So Greece, under the pretext of biding her own time to come in, is losing her great chance. Had she joined, her importance & prestige would have been enormously enhanced, not only in the East but throughout the world. To think of the fate of Turkey being finally decided & Greece not being present, it is heartrending. What a glorious future war offered to us, & foolishly, criminally thrust aside. When the people know the facts, as know them they must, those upon whose shoulders the responsibility falls will have a terrible account to render.

I telephoned to Lloyd George who could not see me tomorrow, being engaged all day with representatives of trade unions.

Wednesday 17th March

Telephoned Lloyd George who said he would endeavour to see me tomorrow, although he was frightfully busy & might only be able to spare a few minutes.

Thursday 18th March

Lloyd George telephoned, asking me to breakfast tomorrow at 9:15 a.m.

The Times [newspaper clipping]

17th March 1915

THE OPPORTUNITY OF GREECE

TIMIDITY OF THE CROWN COUNCIL

ROME, March 16

The *Corriere della Sera* to-day publishes an interview with M. Venizelos [*sic*] in which the Greek statesman said that on two occasions since the outbreak of hostilities, the Triple Entente Powers asked Greece to send men to the help of Serbia. The attitude of Bulgaria, however, prevented Greece from doing so.

When the operations at the Dardanelles began, the Triple Entente Powers semi-officially inquired in Athens whether the King was disposed to intervene. The Crown Council was then convened and M. Venizelos proposed that 50,000 men should be sent to aid the Allies against the Turks, and urged that, in

exchange for this help, Greece should obtain the vilayet of Smyrna. Owing to the objections raised by the Staff, M. Venezelos reduced his proposal to the suggestion that 15,000 men should be dispatched in addition to the cooperation of the Greek Navy and the use of a naval base by the Allies.

The Council then asked whether M. Venezelos would guarantee the safety of the territory received in compensation in Asia Minor, and M. Venezelos, in reply, pointed to the fact that, in recent times, he had twice unconditionally engaged the whole forces of the kingdom and had obtained more than he expected from them. The Council pointed to the impossibility of defending Smyrna against the Turks, but the ex-Premier showed that, if the Allies were victorious, Greece would be the neighbour of Russia and Italy in Asia Minor, and that these three Powers could assist each other against the Turks. M. Venezelos further affirmed that Germany would not wrest the mastery of the seas from Great Britain.

The Council rejected these reasons on the ground of the possibility of an invasion of Greece, in spite of the assurances to the contrary given last May by the Staff.

M. Venezelos expressed his deep disappointment that Greece should neglect this opportunity which, he said, might never present itself again, and finally said he would shortly lay his views before a series of public meetings to be held in different parts of Greece. — Reuter

Friday 19th March

I breakfasted at 8:30 at 11 Downing Street. Lloyd George was as nice & friendly as ever but it is clear that, so far as Greece is concerned, he has considerably cooled down. I pointed it out to him & he replied that he was not the only one whose feelings had undergone a change; all the Ministers nearly feel disgusted with the attitude we have taken up & would prefer to trouble no more with us but leave us entirely on one side. I told him frankly that I wanted to know what would be the attitude of the Triple Entente to Greece if Bulgaria joined them & we did not. He told me that at one time, not so very long ago, both France and England were informed & believed that Bulgaria was of very little use as an ally & of very little importance as an enemy & they were, therefore, willing to neglect her for Greece & Roumania. Bulgaria was supposed to be penniless, her army disorganized & unequipped, & the peasants unwilling to fight again. The Powers, therefore, approached Roumania & Greece, but in both cases, the reply was the

same: "If we join you, we lay ourselves open to an attack by Bulgaria & we, therefore, dare not move." The similarity of the replies, & the fear expressed was an eye-opener to the Powers. It showed them that, after all, Bulgaria was not a negligible quantity but, on the contrary, she held in her hand the very keys of the Balkans. If she could be persuaded to join the Allies, Greece & Roumania could follow suit; therefore, their efforts would now be made towards Bulgaria. Whatever standing Bulgaria now had in the eyes of the Entente Powers had been created by Greece & Roumania & we could only blame ourselves if they neglected us for her. He said also that it was merely a question of terms with Bulgaria; she was quite willing to join provided she could get what she wanted. Then Roumania would join us also & the Powers could do without us. I asked what terms Bulgaria had asked; but he was not at liberty to give me the information. He, however, repeated that if Serbia [*sic*] got Bosnia Herzegovina /*sic*/ & Dalmatia, the Powers would advise her to give up the districts of Ochrida & Monastir to Bulgaria. I then asked: "What about Kavalla?" [*sic*], to which he replied: "You understand that we must look after those who have helped us, more particularly, those who have given their help at an early hour and did not wait to see who was going to be victorious. We don't care a pin about the neutrals. Kavalla is not ours to give, but if Bulgaria makes its cession a condition sine qua non we shall tell her to take it & that none of the Powers will oppose her; that's all." He also said the Powers would give Bulgaria Andrianople and the Evros-Midia line; also that if the proposals made to Greece were withdrawn, they would include not only those covering Smyrna and the littoral, but also the assistance they were ready to give us to enable us to keep Northern Epirus.

_____ I sent a long telegram to Zographos summarising the above.

Later

I received a long telegram from Zographos confirming his cable of the 15th & asking me to reply immediately to the question asked therein.

Sunday 21st March

There was a telegram at the Legation from the Minister in Athens, giving a copy of one received from Petrograd saying that Russia was negotiating with Bulgaria, that the latter had decided to join the Allies, & that Russia had asked her to send 150,000 men into Thrace & towards Constantinople & to assist Serbia with the rest of her army. But Bulgaria refused the latter proposal. Russia

had offered Bulgaria the following concessions: Thrace with an opening on the Hellespont close to Rodosto; the settling of Bulgarians sent away from Turkey, at some spot in Asia Minor; the retrocession of position of Macedonia by Serbia, but this only after the war & assistance, both financially & for war material. Bulgaria in reply has asked for a larger slice of Serbia & the return of the Dobrutcha /sic/ from Roumania.

And with this before them, the Greek Government does not move. If Bulgarians are settled in Asia Minor, they will begin the same propaganda as in Macedonia, & in 20 years time, they will claim as theirs the enormous Greek population of these parts, & we shall see all over again the awful murders & massacres which terrorized Macedonia for so many years!

Tuesday 23rd March

There was a long telegram from Zographos to the Legation stating that, with a view to reassuring the Powers of the Triple Entente on the sentiments of the new Government, the Minister of Foreign Affairs had approached the Ministers of these Powers with the full consent of the King, & told them that the Government was ready to cooperate with the Powers under certain conditions. What had prevented them up to now was the fear of Bulgaria & of exposing the Greek population of Asia Minor to an explosion of fanaticism & revenge on the part of the Musulmans, on the one hand, & on the other, the conviction that the assistance that could be rendered by Greece would, owing to these two dangers, have been of no practical value to the Entente Powers. If Bulgaria can be persuaded to collaborate, then, if necessary, we could send troops to protect the Greeks in Asia, & could render valuable aid to the Powers. — When asked by the Russian Minister whether he would wish to make conditions & ask for concessions, & whether we would be disposed to cooperate elsewhere than in Turkey, he replied that, of course, we should ask for guarantees & concessions but nothing that the Powers could not give &, as regards military assistance elsewhere, this must depend on the advice of our General Staff. Asked by the Minister of Russia & England whether our cooperation depended entirely on Bulgaria joining, he replied that it was only on that basis that he could speak officially, as it was the only one that had been examined, but, personally, he would add that if any other proposals were made to us which would guarantee us against the Bulgarian danger, it would be examined in the most friendly spirit. This information was to be communicated by me to Lloyd George, & the Minister hoped that these declarations would

meet with his approval. —

What a set of children our Ministers appear to be. As if the Powers really wanted our aid for the weight of our army or the strength of our navy. What they want is the moral weight of our joining them. It would have been certain to bring in Bulgaria, Roumania, &, in all probability, Italy; it would have meant that the Greek population in Turkey & Asia Minor would have risen like a single man to meet the Greek troops & assisted the Allies in their task. And what a reward would have been ours; what a moral effect it would have created throughout the world. Poor Greece.

Later

I telephoned to the Treasury & found that Lloyd George was out of town.

Wednesday 24th March

Lloyd George telephoned that he had a cold & was staying at Walton Heath & asked me to go & lunch with him, & I have just returned from spending the afternoon with him. — I read him the whole telegram from Zographos, of which he had already received information through the Foreign Office, & I then translated it to him word for word. He began to walk about the room, saying "Words, words, mere words; what fools your men are." I stopped him & told him I thought there was, in the telegram, a basis for discussion. If we had been dealing with big men, the step taken would have been a very small one, but as we were dealing with small men, I thought the step taken was a very large one. He stopped walking & said: "Perhaps you are right. Yes; I think you have hit the nail on the head." I then asked him what was the present state of affairs in the East. He explained the delays in the operations against the Dardanelles, owing to stormy weather. He said the Government had the assurance that Bulgaria would join them, but they would not say yes definitively, in the hope of persuading the Powers to obtain Kavalla /sic/ and South Eastern Macedonia for them, & went on, "You see, we are moving in a vicious circle; Bulgaria will not speak definitely unless we sacrifice Greece, & you won't decide unless Bulgaria cooperates." He repeated that, at present, with her fleet, Greece would be more useful than any other country, but after they had forced the Dardanelles, we should be the least necessary. He told me of the negotiations between Russia & Bulgaria, & that the former appeared jealous of Greece & would much prefer a Slav ally. The day might come, however, pretty soon when all the Allies would give Bulgaria a free hand in order to assure her cooperation.

I then asked him whether, in case Greece joined in without Bulgaria, England & France would send us, say, 20,000 or 30,000 men to keep watch over our frontiers & would notify Bulgaria that any attack on us would be considered by the Powers of the Entente as a *casus belli*? He replied that he did not object to sending us some troops but he thought the same were not needed as, in the first instance, the Allies had more men in the East than they could supply & were sending them back to Egypt &, therefore, our own army would not be required, & then the Powers would notify Bulgaria that Greece had entered the Alliance & that any step taken against her would be considered as an unfriendly act & would be repulsed with all their armed forces. Referring to the statement in Zographos' telegram that if any proposals were made, they would be considered in the most friendly spirit, he repeated that no further offer or proposals would be made by the Powers to Greece, but any such must come from us. We must not forget that we are dealing with the Great Powers, who have their dignity. They had made proposals & offers and these had been rejected: they would not again lay themselves open to a slight from Greece. We then discussed what guarantees & concessions Greece might acquire for her assistance. I stated that I had no instructions on the subject & would not, therefore, in any way bind the Government, but that my personal views on the subject were as follows:

- 1) A guarantee for the integrity of our actual possessions, with the armed assistance of the Powers in case of need.
- 2) The recognition of Northern Epirus as part & parcel of the Kingdom of Greece.
- 3) The vilayet of Smyrna with hinterland & the littoral, with frontiers to be settled later.
- 4) Cession to Greece of the Islands of the Dodecanese retained by Italy.
- 5) Cession by England of Cyprus.
- 6) Financial assistance as required &
- 7) An offensive & defensive alliance with England.

I thought that these concessions would fully satisfy both the King, the Government, & the Hellenic aspirations of the people. When I got to No. 4, he stopped me & said that, from their information, the Government had every hope of seeing Italy join the Allies in April or May and that, if she did, it would be impossible to ask her to give up the Dodecanese. If, however, she did not join in, England would be willing to assist us as much as possible in obtaining these islands. I reminded him of Churchill's and his own

statements on the subject, & also of Grey's public declaration in the House of Commons, but he replied that if Italy were their ally, the whole circumstances would have changed. — As regards Cyprus, none of the Ministers, except perhaps Kitchener, would object to our having it. I pointed out that if the aim of this war was to liberate small nationalities, it would be an immoral act on the part of England not to free the Cypriots, & he agreed. Concerning the proposed alliance with England, he said I knew his views on the subject & the whole Cabinet would welcome it, as it would render the two countries masters of the Mediterranean; they would be willing to discuss the question & settle the basis, but the final treaty could only be signed after the end of the war. He asked me to tell Zographos that the Powers had decided that, after this war, there would no longer be any Ottoman Empire, neither in Europe nor even in Asia.

I asked whether, at any time, Russia had stated that she did not wish our army to enter Constantinople with the Allies, as had been mentioned in the Greek press; but he told me that was not so. Russia did not like us and was perhaps afraid of our influence in Turkey, but had not laid down any conditions in regard to us. She was negotiating with Bulgaria and preferred to have her as an ally. Even Churchill was now much more pro-Bulgarian than pro-Greek, notwithstanding our navy. He said that all their information tended to show that there was no longer any danger of an overwhelming attack against Servia /sic/; the fall of Przemysl had relieved the situation entirely on that side. I again mooted the question of his going to the East to resuscitate the Balkan alliance, & told him, in my opinion, he could do it in a month, & as it would probably curtail the war by many months, it would be the greatest thing he had ever done, not only for his own country & for the Balkan powers, but for the whole of humanity. He agreed & said that he had not given up all hope of going. — He then stated that I could telegraph to Zographos & tell him that if Greece were to offer to the Allies her wholehearted support, provided the guarantees & concessions mentioned by me, but particularly Nos. 4 & 7, were granted, he believed he could get England & her Allies to give their consent. He stated that a Cabinet meeting would be held on Friday next at 12 o'clock & if I could give him some news, it might prevent any decision contrary to our interests being taken.

Later

I telegraphed a resumé of the above to Mr. Zographos.

Friday 26th March

Lloyd George telephoned to know if I had any communication to make to him & I replied that no reply had come from Greece. — Gennadios, whom I saw, praised my telegram which he called an historical document.

The Times [newspaper clipping]

Monday 29th March

GREEK FOREIGN POLICY

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

ATHENS, March 28.

An official *communiqué* issued by the Government on Greek foreign policy says:

"The Government, attributing great importance to the calm and tranquility of public opinion regarding the proper treatment of foreign affairs, considers it an absolute necessity to deny statements to the effect that if Greece does not abandon her attitude of neutrality, she will lose the opportunity of realising her national aspirations.

"The divergence of views between the Government and its predecessor arose from opinions regarding the gravity of the dangers threatening the integrity of the country. The Government is doing everything in its power to avoid possible danger."

These men are fools, or worse. They cannot see beyond today. They do not appear to have any ideal; they cannot realise that the time is at hand for Greece to fulfill her destiny in this world, and that the time may pass when it will be possible for her to do so.

Thursday 15th April

All these weeks, I have been eating my heart out in the hopes of receiving a reply to my last telegram, but all in vain, & now that, at last, a cable has arrived, I do not know whether I should rejoice or not, firstly, because the Government is endeavouring to adopt Venizelos' policy without his breadth of view or his moral standing, and, secondly, because I fear it may be too late. — The telegram to the Legation says that with the full consent of the King and the concurrence of the General Staff, the Prime Minister, accompanied by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, attended on the Ministers of the Entente Powers & placed before them concrete proposals. He stated that ever since the declaration of war by Turkey, Greece considered that she should cooperate with the Powers and has offered to do so if she could be guaranteed against

the danger of an attack by Bulgaria. That the best guarantee would be if Bulgaria joined the Alliance as she had been led to expect Bulgaria would do. As this was not the case, and as the Powers could not force her, Greece must find some other means for taking part in the war to liberate the Greeks still under [*sic*] Turkish yoke, which would depend solely on the goodwill of the Powers of the Entente. — Greece could join in the war if the Powers took the formal engagement to assure to her the benefit of full solidarity with its allies, viz. to guarantee, during the war & for some time after, the integrity of her possessions, including Northern Epirus. The telegram goes on to say that the details of the cooperation must be settled by the General Staffs, with this reservation, that if Bulgaria remains neutral, the Greek Army could not be employed outside Turkey in Europe; that the document to be prepared must set out the territorial & other concessions to be made to Greece, the financial & other facilities to be granted. — In communicating this telegram, the Government winds up:

Je vous prie de communiquer par Monsieur Stavridi à M. Lloyd George copie de la communication du Gouvernement Royal, en lui faisant constater que celui-ci n'a pas perdu de vue les suggestions qu'il a bien voulu lui faire par l'intermédiaire de M. Stavridi, qu'il en a tenu un compte sérieux, qu'il s'en est inspiré en grande partie à formuler sa communication d'aujourd'hui aux Gouvernements des trois Puissances Amies. Le Gouvernement Royal espère que Mr. Lloyd George continuera à nous prêter son Précieux appui amical, au cours des négociations qui vont suivre."

_____ I must not forget to note that I wrote to D. G. Rhallys [*sic*] who is talked of as the future leader of the Venizelist party, until the latter returns to political life again. I gave him a full report of my various negotiations [*sic*] with the Brit. Govt & of my aspirations in regard to the future of Greece.

Friday 16th April

I telephoned to Lloyd George who was too busy with his proposed Budget to be able to see me, but would fix up an appointment shortly. — I saw Gennadios who told me that he had handed the copy cable to Grey who had read it & simply thanked him. When asked what reply he should give to the Government, Grey replied that he could say nothing until he had conferred with the Allies!

Monday 19th April

I telephoned to Lloyd George but was only able to speak

to his Secretary Mr. Hamilton. The Chancellor could not see me, but would telephone as soon as he was free. It is clear that he does not wish to see me or to discuss the question of Greece's intervention.

Gennadios tells me that he has been unable to see Sir Edward Grey. When asked for an appointment, he was referred to the Permanent Under Secretary, who told him that no answer could be given to Greece's proposal before England had concerted with her allies. It is clear that negotiations [*sic*] are proceeding with Italy and Bulgaria, & until something is decided in either of those quarters, no decision will be come to concerning our intervention.

Friday 30th April

Another telegram has been received from Zographos for communication to Sir Edward Grey. He says that when the Greek Govt made their proposals on the 14th April, they had asked for a guarantee of our territory for a time after the end of the war, but as this guarantee appears not to be one that the Powers can give, Greece can only offer to intervene if she can herself, by her own strength, provide against future dangers. So long, therefore, as Bulgaria remains neutral, Greece must maintain her army & fleet intact. But in order to give irrefutable proof of her goodwill, she is prepared immediately to take part in the war with her whole fleet & to offer, moreover, to the Allies every facility they may require on her territory. Zographos adds a confidential note to the effect that the French delegate to the "Commission du Danube" who was recently in Athens, coming direct from Paris, had told him that he thought such a proposal would be accepted by the Powers. He adds, "Veuillez porter ce qui précède à la connaissance de Mr. Stavridi en le priant de s'en inspirer pour en parler à titre personnel et confidentiel au Ministre des Finances, à qui il peut présenter l'idée ci-dessus comme étant celle que lui-même avait suggérée il y a quelques semaines."

The whole sting is in the last five words. If they had agreed a few weeks ago to the proposal made by Lloyd George, everything would have gone smoothly & Greece would now have been on the way to becoming the power in the East which she was destined to be. These men seem to think that they are living in the good old times when days, weeks, or even months did not materially alter things; this war has opened neither their eyes nor their minds.

As in this cable, they ask for no concessions or guarantees, it may be that the Powers will agree, unless, as Venizelos himself suggested, we come too late.

Same date 7 p.m.

I telephoned to Lloyd George who was out of town.

Monday 3rd May

I telephoned to the Treasury and spoke to Mr. Hamilton. I told him I wished to make an important communication to Lloyd George & asked him to fix up an appointment, which he promised to do. — Later he telephoned that the Chancellor was much too busy but would telephone me as soon as he was free!

It looks as if we were too late.

Wednesday 5th May

I again spoke to Mr. Hamilton; he said the Chancellor had not forgotten but that it was impossible for him to see me at present.

Saturday 8th May

I received a letter from Mr. Hamilton written at the request of the Chancellor to say he was sorry he has been unable to see me but that I will understand that he has been overwhelmed with work during the last day or two.

There is no hint of a possible interview in the near future.

Sunday 9th May

I wrote to Lloyd George telling him of the cables I had received and that I wished to see him for a few minutes to communicate them to him. I told him that Greece was ready and willing to join the war on the side of the Entente Powers & that I thought he & I might manage to secure that cooperation sooner than by allowing matters to go through the usual diplomatic channels.

Monday 10th May

I was wrong in my surmise that our Government had learnt a lesson & was now offering its cooperation without asking for guarantees or concessions. At the Legation, Gennadios showed me a telegram of the 6th Inst. in which Zographos sends him copy [*sic*] of a cable he had just sent out to Romanos in Paris. He refers to the telegram proposing to cooperate with the Allies by means of our fleet only, & suggests that Romanos should see Delcassé & explain to him that, at the previous interview, he had omitted to mention certain points which he considered to be "*sous entendus*." These points were that we should only declare war on Turkey, & that we should be promised 1) Full benefits of the solidarity with the Allies, to insure [*sic*], both during war & in Treaty of peace,

the integrity of our territories; 2) Every assistance, financially & for provisions; 3) Territorial compensations as given by Venizelos to the Ministers of the 3 Powers. — If Delcassé approves, then only with the final proposal be made. —

Of course, France cannot approve without the consent of the other Allies and it appears to me that England does not wish us to assist, or, at all events, she will wait until the results of the elections are known. If the present Govt is returned to power, then perhaps will they negotiate /sic/ with it; but it seems impossible that the country should be faithless to their greatest, not to say their only, statesman.

Saturday 22nd May

Italy has broken off with Austria and decided to join the war. Now it is clear why Lloyd George did not wish to see me, & why the proposals of Greece, while not rejected, were left without a reply. — It is impossible for one to rejoice at the entry of Italy into the fray; I feel as if she had usurped a place belonging to Greece. She will now realise her national ideals & aspirations, whereas we may have to wait for centuries, if ever the chance should come to us again. The worst thought is that the Dodecanese is now lost to us; never will the Powers and Italy give up our twelve islands inhabited purely by a Greek population. And to think that this war is fought for national redemption, & to free small & crushed nationalities, what hypocrisy!

Wednesday 16th June

Venizelos has been reelected & his party has a large majority. Greece has been true to her greatest son. There may still be a chance of salvation.

Wednesday 23rd June

Lloyd George telephoned to me that he wished to see me tomorrow; as he was staying at Walton, we could not breakfast together, but I was to call at 6 p.m. at the new Ministry of Munitions.

I telephoned to Gennadios to know whether there was any news of importance that I did not know, but he had no information to give me. — It looks as if the Powers wished again to reopen negotiations /sic/ with Greece now that Venizelos is returning to power.

Thursday 24th June

I attended at 6 o'clock punctually at 6 Whitehall Gardens where I was received by Lloyd George. He greeted me most cordially. His

first words were: "Now that I see that Greece is sound at heart, I have the greatest pleasure in meeting you again." He went on to explain that he had not wished to see me before as he had no confidence in the Gounaris Government & he did not want to help it to adopt the policy of Venizelos & take the benefit of it to themselves. He wished to impress upon me that there was nothing personal in his refusal to see me.

Now, however, that Venizelos had been reelected, he & Churchill wanted to see me to decide what steps should be taken to reopen the negotiations [sic] with Venizelos, so that Greece could join the Alliance at the the earliest possible moment. I pointed out that Venizelos had been out of office for three months, that the King had been at death's door & was not yet out of danger, & that so many important events had taken place in the meantime that I thought it would not be possible for Venizelos to come to an immediate decision. He must get into the saddle first, make himself acquainted with the doings of the present Government, & then, if the King's health was restored, it might be possible for him to come to a decision as to what Greece should do.

At this moment, Churchill came in & greeted me as an old friend. Lloyd George repeated what had passed between us & he replied: "I shall be most disappointed if Greece has not declared war by the 1st of August."

I pointed out to him that that was impossible. The date fixed for the convening of the Parliament was the 20th July, & it was not to be expected that in ten days, Venizelos could have gathered up the reins of Government, formed his cabinet, & decided on the policy to be followed. Lloyd George agreed with me that it was not possible, however great a man Venizelos might be.

They then explained to me that the French Govt had been negotiating [sic] with the Gounaris Govt and had received various proposals from the latter which the French Govt were prepared to accept. In fact, they were willing to give the guarantees asked for, whereas Venizelos had never mentioned the question of guarantees and was willing to trust the Powers. These proposals had been brought before the Cabinet here, and Lloyd George & Churchill had strenuously opposed them, being helped in this task by the Prime Minister and Grey. Lloyd George said: "Venizelos is the man we know, he is our friend, we trust him implicitly; for us Venizelos is Greece. We don't know & we don't want to know the other lot — Gounaris & Company."

He went on to say that the Powers were still prepared to reopen negotiations [sic] with Venizelos and to grant to Greece all

they had previously offered, but it was necessary for them to know, as soon as possible, what were Venizelos' views as to the future, even before he took up the reins of Government. I pointed out that it was not possible for me to telegraph to him at present & all I could do would be to write & report our interview and await his answer. They both replied that letters were far too dangerous nowadays, owing to various censorships & they had decided to ask me to go to Athens, see Venizelos, & get him to state his views as to the future, insofar as Greece was concerned. I replied that the proposal was unexpected & I should like to think it over, although personally I felt disposed to accept the task; I also said that the journey might be wasted, as it was possible that Venizelos would not be prepared to come to a decision until he had made himself acquainted with all that had taken place during his absence & had probably conferred with the King on the subject. They quite saw the strength of this but still insisted that it would be advisable if I went immediately. They had thought of me because they knew the confidence Venizelos had in me &, if they sent some one /sic/ from the Foreign Office, they were sure he would not speak so openly to him as he could to me.

I then asked what they were prepared to do for Greece and we repeated the various points discussed previously, excluding, however, the surrender of the Dodecanese by Italy. On this point, I pointed out that the whole of the justification of the present war was the liberation & preservation of small & crushed nationalities. That Italy had been brought into the welter with a view to redeeming the Italians under the Austrian yoke, & to end up the war leaving those Greek populations under the Italian yoke would be a crying shame which would stamp as hypocrisy most of the declarations made by the Statesmen of the Entente Powers. — They did not dissent, but stated that the question was one to be discussed at the Conference table; at present, they could make no promise to Greece which might appear to their Italian ally as contrary to the latter's interests. I went over the other points & they agreed to all. Churchill stated, in regard to the proposed offensive & defensive alliance to be entered into between Greece & England, that he expected all the alliances would be continued after the end of the war, but he was quite certain that France as well as England would be willing to renew the alliance with Greece.

At this point, Lloyd George left the room for a few minutes. I asked Churchill what was the present position with Bulgaria & he replied that they were still negotiating /sic/, but that Bulgaria insisted on receiving immediately parts of Macedonia from Servia /sic/

& Kavalla, Serres, & Drama from Greece, without awaiting the end of the war. He said: "Greece will have, in the long run, to sacrifice Kavalla & district as it will be absolutely necessary to revive the Balkan alliance, & this can only be achieved by such a sacrifice." He went on to say that it was, after all, a very small matter in comparison with the reward promised to Greece in Asia Minor, the situation of which he described. I told him it would be impossible for Greece to submit to this, and that I felt convinced that Venizelos would not again make such a proposal. Moreover, he had only done so as a very last resort & in view of the declaration made by the General Staff that it was impossible for Greece to join the Allies unless Bulgaria joined also. Churchill then said: "Wait a minute; we must have the Minister's views on this. He must know what you have said," & he went to the door & called Lloyd George back; he then repeated our conversation to the latter & Lloyd George agreed entirely with me. He pointed out that the circumstances had materially altered since Venizelos resigned & that he did not know what promises had been made during the electoral campaign. I pointed out that Kavalla had voted unanimously for the Venizelist party, & Lloyd George turned to Churchill & said: "How could we possibly hand them over after that?"

After we had fully discussed the question, I stated that I would not trust to my memory alone but wished to put down in black and white a résumé of our conversation which I wished them to see, & it was arranged that we were to meet at lunch tomorrow when I would submit my document, if I decided to go out, &, in the meantime, Lloyd George was to speak to the Prime Minister & report our conversation.

Before separating, Churchill stated that there were 400,000 mauser [*sic*] rifles & a huge quantity of cartridges for the same, belonging to Brazil, already packed at Rio & that the British Government had been negotiating [*sic*] for the purchase thereof, but had been countered at every step by Germany & now Brazil had decided not to sell them to a belligerent [*sic*]. These rifles were a vital question for their allies, the Russians, & were worth at least 60,000 men to them. He wished me to endeavour to obtain leave from the Greek Government to negotiate [*sic*] for the purchase of the rifles for Greece, & afterward, to transfer them to England, the latter paying all expenses. Both he and Lloyd George impressed upon me the urgency of the matter & I was to think it over & see what could be done & report at our meeting tomorrow.

Same day, 7 p.m.

I attended at Legation & reported to Gennadios the purport of

the above interview. He strongly urged me to go out and considered it a great honour & proof of great confidence that was shown to me. I promised to report my decision tomorrow.

Same day, 10 p.m.

The following is the document I have just drawn up & will submit to the Ministers tomorrow:

It is desired, if possible, to ascertain what will be the attitude of Mr. Venizelos to the proposals made to him on behalf of the Powers of the Triple Entente prior to his resignation.

The Entente Powers desire Greece to declare war on Turkey and send an army of about 250,000 men to such point in European or Asiatic Turkey as may be agreed between the General Staffs in order to create a diversion from the Gallipoli Peninsula, and that the Greek fleet should, at the same time, cooperate with that of the Allies.

This would mean that Greece would enter into the existing alliance with a view to liberating the Greek population still under the Turkish yoke and would thereby undertake all the responsibilities and acquire all the benefits to be derived from its solidarity with the Allies.

The Entente Powers will guarantee Greece against an attack by Bulgaria by notifying the latter of the entry of Greece into the alliance and that any attack against Greece would be considered an act of war against the Powers and be dealt with accordingly.

The guarantees and compensation that will be given to Greece shall be:

- 1) A guarantee for the integrity of her present possessions, including the Islands and Northern Epirus.
- 2) Smyrna and those parts of Asia Minor described in Mr. Venizelos' memorandum.
- 3) Cession of Cyprus by England.
- 4) Financial assistance on the same basis and terms as granted to the other Allies.
- 5) Assistance for arms, ammunition, and provisions.
- 6) The Alliance, so far at all events as England is concerned, to be continued after the war, or a fresh alliance to be concluded.

The Powers would welcome an understanding between Bulgaria and Greece, such as would enable both Powers to join the Alliance, but will not bring pressure to bear upon Greece to make any sacrifice to attain that end, though they would appreciate any effort made by Greece for that purpose.

Friday 25th June

I lunched at 1:45 p.m. at 11 Downing Street with Lloyd George & Churchill. I told them that I had decided to accept their invitation & to leave for Greece at the earliest possible moment. I then handed each of them a copy of the above memorandum & they both said it clearly expressed their views. The only objection raised by Churchill was to No. 1) of the guarantees, as he said that if the Powers guaranteed the integrity of our present territory, it would debar them from asking us to surrender Kavalla and Eastern Macedonia even if they found that, by so doing, they could induce Bulgaria to join the Alliance. I then pointed out the last paragraph of the memo, in which it is stated that no pressure will be brought to bear upon Greece to make any sacrifice to Bulgaria, although the Powers would welcome any steps we might take to bring about the collaboration of Bulgaria. Lloyd George thought they must be satisfied with that and rely upon Venizelos' good, sound common sense to do the needful. I pointed out how unjust it would be if, owing to our intervention, Bulgaria decided to join the Allies, we were asked to surrender some of our territory to her. Churchill was still of the opinion that Bulgaria would remain adamant unless some such promise was made. We then talked of the serious Russian reverses, which would clearly prevent the Allies making any serious impression upon their enemies for another twelve months, when Russia would probably be furnished with sufficient arms and ammunition. I pointed out that this was in great part due to the faulty diplomacy of England. To their question as to what I meant, I replied that if Lloyd George had taken my advice & gone out to the Balkans, as he had practically agreed to do, early in March, he would have brought about the reconstruction of the Balkan alliance, including Roumania, and that by now Bulgaria would be at the Chataljinec relieving the terrible pressure of the Gallipoli peninsula, Roumania would have joined forces with Russia in Bukovina & Transylvania & that Greece would either be assisting Serbia to invade Herzegovina or attacking the Turks in Asia Minor. The whole face of things would have been different & perhaps victory would have been by now well in sight. They both agreed that if Lloyd George had gone out & had succeeded in his task, the history of this terrible war

might have different. Now, however, with his new duties as Minister of Munitions, it was impossible to spare the time. No explanation was given as to why, after the Prime Minister's consent to it, he had not gone out at the time.

We then discussed the question of the Brazilian Mauser rifles and ammunition. I asked for authority to mention the matter to the present Greek Govt so that no time should be lost, & that negotiations [*sic*] should be begun immediately. After a good deal of discussion, it was decided that I should then talk it over with Gounaris & try & get his authority that I should go out to Brazil & carry off the deal before Greece joined in the war. They know exactly the price that was asked & every person who had to receive a bribe, but price was of no importance &, if found I had to pay £200,000 or even £300,000 more, I need not hesitate, as those rifles were as valuable to the Allies as a victory won on the field of battle.

I then talked over the difficulty of getting quickly to Greece at the present time as, owing to the movements of troops, the journey through Italy was difficult & there was no regular service of boats from Brindisi. Churchill then said that every week some couriers left with dispatches for the Dardanelles from the Admiralty & as I was going to Greece in regard to the Brazilian rifles, it would be easy for him or Lloyd George to get me a pass & I could go with the officers & would be taken on board an English warship that would convey me to the Piraeus. He would see to it immediately & let me know early next week what day I was to leave.

Lloyd George wished me to telegraph to him immediately after my interview with Venizelos. I told him it would be impossible for me to do so, as the telegraph office would not accept messages in code from a private individual, & he then said that he would get me a letter from the Foreign Office addressed to Sir Francis Elliott so that I could use the Legation code. He recommended me to be very careful & tactful with the Minister, as the diplomatists were awfully jealous of their own privileges & he might resent my doing what he would consider his business.

We parted on the understanding that I was to hear from them early next week, when they would tell me what arrangements they had made.

Wednesday 30th June

I am still here awaiting instructions. I have not heard a word from either Lloyd George or Churchill. I wrote a note tonight to Lloyd George telling him that all my preparations were made & asking for instructions.

Friday 2nd July

Not having heard in reply to my letter, I telephoned to the Ministry of Munitions & spoke to Mr. J. T. Davies & told him I was waiting for instructions from the Minister & he was to speak to him & telephone me. He has not, however, done so! This silence is incomprehensible. Here am I, dealing with the two most capable men in the British cabinet; both geniuses on their way, the one the most capable leader, the other the most audacious imagination and yet, although both see the right thing to do & decide upon doing it, they act as amateurs. I cannot forget my negotiations [*sic*] over the proposed purchase of the "Rio de Janeiro" when everything was settled & on the point of being carried through & I was, at the last moment, thrown overboard without a single word of apology or even explanation. I am not going to allow myself to be placed in a similar position again, & I shall not leave for Greece without proper authority & proper arrangements being made.

I have thought much over the question of the Brazilian rifles & went this afternoon to see Gennadios on the subject. I told him the whole story & asked him to open up negotiations [*sic*] here with the Brazilian Minister. He replied that he would not do so without instructions from the Government & offered to telegraph & explain matters & obtain authority for him to negotiate [*sic*]. I, however, dissuaded him from doing so, as I had promised not to approach the present Government unless Venizelos approves. I told him that he could begin the negotiations [*sic*] which were certain to take more than 18 days, & by then Venizelos would be in power & we should have no difficulties in obtaining his approval of the steps taken. After a long discussion, Gennadios promised to see the Brazilian Minister tomorrow on the subject.

Sunday 4th July

The papers state that Sir H. Bax Ironside is leaving Sofia & that Mr. O'Beirne is going there as British Minister. This may, to some extent, explain the incomprehensible delay in giving me final instruction. It is possible, it is even likely, that a further attempt is to be made to bring in Bulgaria who, being on the spot & able to attack Turkey, would be of more use to the Allies at present in relieving the pressure on Gallipoli. It is precisely clear that, without some diversion, the conquering of the Gallipoli peninsula will be the toughest job undertaken by the Allies. At present, the Turks are able to renew their troops constantly, without hindrance, whereas the Allies have not sufficient men to do so. If Turkey was attacked elsewhere, either in Thrace or Asia Minor, by Bulgaria & Greece,

the terrible pressure would immediately be relieved. It is extraordinary that England remains satisfied with having only second-rate men in the Balkan capitals as representatives when the winning over of these countries is of such vital importance to the Allies. It is not as if the shortcomings of their diplomats were unknown to the Cabinet; every Minister knows them and talks openly of them.

Tuesday 7th July

I wrote to Mr. Davies tonight, telling him that I was waiting for instructions from the Minister & asking him to let me have some message tomorrow.

Wednesday 8th July

Mr. Davies rang me up on the telephone & told me that Lloyd George was sorry for the delay but "for the present, the matter must remain in abeyance."

At least now I know where I am. The Cabinet or some members thereof have overruled the two Ministers. My surmise as to negotiations [*sic*] with Bulgaria is probably correct.

Monday 19th July

Gennadios showed me a letter from the "Private Secretary of the Foreign Office" asking for a "laissez passer" for Greece for Mr. Churchill accompanied by Mr. Guest M.P. & Lieut. Col. Sankey [*sic*] (in error for Hankey).

I presume the Cabinet have decided that Churchill had better go & see Venizelos himself.

Wednesday 21st July

The meeting of the Greek Chamber has been postponed until the 20th August, owing to the King's health, so that Venizelos will not take up the reins before then.

The Times [newspaper clipping]

Friday 23rd July

MR. CHURCHILL'S RETURN

Mr. Churchill reappeared in the House of Commons yesterday after some days' absence and set at rest the persistent rumours that he had gone to the Dardanelles.

Extract of speech of Venizelos in the Chamber on 3rd November 1915.

Je vous ai rappelé que notre participation à la guerre, moyennant des forces militaires minimales, aurait été acceptée, et que la participation de la Grèce aurait été acceptée, même par sa flotte seulement et même par sa flotte légère.

M. Gounaris. C'est là une affaire postérieure.

M. Vénizélos. Elle n'est pas postérieure; je me rapelle bien que, pendant les premiers jours de votre avènement au pouvoir, deux ou trois jours après mon départ, vous recutes une dépêche de Londres, de la part d'une personnalité officielle, et qui n'était pas notre ministre à Londres. Elle vous transmettait une communication confidentielle du ministre des finances anglais d'alors, Lloyd George, relatant ce qui s'était passé au Conseil ministériel.

Je regrette que vous ayez considéré cette communication comme indigne d'attention parce qu'elle ne provenait pas du ministre des affaires étrangères lui-même.

M. Gounaris. Vous ne vous rappelez pas de ce qui se passait de vos jours et vous vous rappelez de ce que nous avons fait nous-mêmes et que vous n'avez du reste jamais su?

M. Vénizélos. Vous me dites que la proposition de participation de la Grèce n'aurait pas été acceptée; je vous réponds que, si elle ne l'était pas, vous êtes encore plus impardonnable d'avoir assumé le pouvoir. Plus tard, vous avez mené des pourparlers pour la participation par la flotte seule, ce qui démontre combien sérieuse était l'indication de Lloyd George, et que vous n'avez pas considérée comme digne d'attention, parce qu'elle ne provenait pas de sir [*sic*] Edward Grey.

This clearly refers to my telegrams to Gounaris.

Thursday 4th November 1915

At 2 p.m. Mr. Davies telephones to me that the Minister of Munitions wished to see me on urgent matter at 4 p.m. today & I promised to be at the Ministry punctually.

At 4 p.m. I was there. Lloyd George greeted me with the words: "Are you prepared to take a long journey?" to which I replied that, if I could do any good to Greece or England, I was ready to go anywhere. He then went on to explain that General Joffre who had been in London last week had proposed to "apply compulsion to Greece" to make her join in the war, that the question had been fully discussed at a Cabinet meeting that very day & that he had proposed that, before any steps be taken, it would be better to ascertain privately the views of M. Venizelos so that the Powers could act in conformity with such views, & that he had proposed

that I should go out & speak quite fully with Venizelos & cable back his advice on the subject. He added, "For once, the 21 Ministers were unanimous, so you have an official request from the British Government to go." I told him I was highly flattered at the request, which I accepted without reserve; I, however, stated that I thought a "compulsory ally" was an impossibility, & that I did not think they ought to endeavour to force Greece to fight against her will. He said he would leave me to discuss the question with Venizelos, & the Entente Powers would follow his advice, whatever it was. I then asked, for my guidance, what was the attitude of the Entente towards Bulgaria & he replied that they had now completely "done with Bulgaria," that they would make no further overtures to her, and, in fact, would not hesitate to dismember her after the war. I again pointed out how their attitude to Bulgaria had damaged their prospects both with Greece & Serbia; I reminded him that the Prime Minister, in his speech on Tuesday last in the House, when I was present, had differentiated between Serbia's enemys [*sic*] by stating that she was attacked by Germany, Austria, & the King of Bulgaria; that, to my mind, the Government was still playing with the Bulgarian evil, by throwing the blame on to the King whilst coquetting with the people, and that this would have a very serious effect in Greece & Serbia where it would be impossible to make the people believe that the Entente Powers had altered their pro-Bulgarian policy. To this, Lloyd George replied in a whisper: "We are endeavouring to foment a revolution in Bulgaria." I told him that it was folly, that the whole army & people were heart & soul in the war on the side of the King & that only if there were a serious defeat, would the people turn against the King; that the Entente were still hypnotised by the Bulgarians & that, so long as this lasted, they could not expect Greece to assist them. He replied, "Let Greece tell us that she wants the whole of the littoral of the Aegean & the whole of Thrace & we will promise it & give it to her; the only thing we cannot promise is Constantinople." He again repeated that they wanted to obtain Venizelos' opinion as to how to act, & as to whether he agreed that compulsion should be applied to king [*sic*] about the intervention of Greece. They would also like to have some idea of the views of the Government that might be formed & I might be able to ascertain them. He told me that he had telephoned to his Secretary to make the appointment with me from the Cabinet Council & that Asquith had suggested that I should see him, but that Grey had said that, as it was a Foreign Office matter, he had better see me; to which the Prime Minister had acquiesced. He then rang for his Secretary & told him to telephone to Grey & tell him

I was at the Ministry of Munitions. A few minutes later, Mr. Davies came in & said Sir Edward Grey would see me "tomorrow morning." At this, Lloyd George got angry & asked to be put through to Grey on the telephone. He spoke angrily in my presence, & said he had had enough tomfoolery, that there was no time to lose, & that the request made to me was after a unanimous decision of the Cabinet. — A silence. — then, "Well, telephone for Gennadios to come & see you at once if you must speak to him first." . . . Then . . . "It's all nonsense; Stavridi will tell Gennadios himself." After a few more words, Lloyd George put down the instrument & said, "More Foreign Office etiquette. Grey wanted to see Gennadios first; however, he will see you immediately, so go round to the Foreign Office & we will meet again tomorrow."

I went round to the Foreign Office & was received by Sir Eric Drummond, the private Secretary. I told him that I presumed he knew why I had called, that I wished to see Sir Edward Grey as I had been asked by the British Government to go on a mission to Greece. He threw up his arms in horror & said twice, "Oh, Mr. Stavridi, you must not put it that way. The British Government cannot ask you, a representative of Greece, to undertake a mission." I told him he was trying, as the French say, to drown himself in a glass of water; that I did not care in "what way he put it"; that I was going out to Greece & had come to see Sir Edward Grey. He then left the room & returned after a few minutes, saying that Sir Edward felt unwell & wished me to see Sir Arthur Nicholson, as he was leaving immediately to go to bed. — He then left me again &, on his return, said I had perhaps better see Sir Edward in the morning. — I telephoned to Lloyd George & arranged to breakfast with him tomorrow at 9 a.m. & he was to arrange for Sir Edward Grey to be present.

Later

I went to the Legation & reported to Gennadios who fully approved my acceptance of the mission.

Friday 5th November

I breakfasted with Lloyd George at 9 a.m. Grey did not turn up but sent Eric Drummond. He talked over the proposed journey, & Lloyd George said that, as the ordinary route took so long, the Admiralty must arrange for me to have a special boat from Italy, & Drummond was to see Balfour on the subject. We then discussed my mission & Lloyd George impressed upon me that it was the French Government that had suggested applying compulsion to

Greece & that the whole Cabinet here were quite ready to adopt this policy, provided Venizelos approved. I mentioned that the Minister of Justice, Mr. Rhallys was my uncle, & that I could talk to him freely, and asked whether I could do anything with the Government as well. Lloyd George replied that, after I had heard what Venizelos had to say, they could leave me quite a free hand as to what steps I should take either with Rhallys or the Government. Arrangements would be made so that I should have every assistance at the British Legation & Sir Francis Elliott would be asked to code any telegrams I wished to send. I asked what the Powers had decided to do in regard to the Serbian campaign, & Lloyd George replied that they had made up their minds with General Joffre to make every effort that might be needed to bring it to a successful issue, even to the extent of sending half a million men if that were necessary. I pointed out the tremendous delay in carrying out the promise made to Venizelos on the 21st Sept. to send 150,000 men & he answered that all that would be remedied now, that there were already close on 80,000 men at Salonica, mostly French, but that the English would send men taken from the trenches in France & who had, therefore, a thorough knowledge of warfare. — I then asked whether they had come to a decision in regard to the form of compulsion would take if they decided to apply it. Lloyd George said no decision had been taken & he would like to discuss the question with Venizelos, but with a country with a seaboard like Greece, depending for her food on imports, & with so many Islands, it was not very difficult for the masters of the sea to apply the form of compulsion that would be most felt & bring about a quick result. On parting, he recommended me to Eric Drummond & added, "If you have any difficulty whatever, ring me up & wherever I am, I will come to you immediately & see that the difficulties are got over so that you can leave tomorrow."

Later

I went to the Foreign Office & again Sir Edward Grey was unable to see me! (I will not comment.) I was shown the telegram he had sent to Sir Francis Elliott, which was all that could be desired. Eric Drummond then took me round to the Director of Transport who arranged my whole journey. I was to leave tomorrow, go straight to Brindisi where a torpedo boat would take me on to Patras. I telephoned to Gennadios who promised me "laissez passer" from the French & Italian Embassies.

At 8:15 p.m. on my return home, I found a Foreign Office messenger with a bag of despatches for Athens, a special Foreign

Office courier's (red) passport, & instructions to go to Taranto & report myself to the Admiral in charge of the Adriatic fleet who would arrange for my journey to Greece.

6 November (Saturday)

I left London by the 8:30 a.m. train Folkestone to Boulogne & arrived in Paris in time to change stations, dine, & leave at 8:55 p.m. for Modane & Italy.

End